



Shadows in the Moonlight



92 1 9

Chapter 1 by Bailey Hever

As Andrew was about to board the plane headed for London, England, his teacher, Mr. Hire came up beside him.

"Andrew, I do not have your permission slip for this trip," he whispered in Andrew's ear.

"I gave it to you the day it was due. Exactly at ten o'clock in the morning. I made sure of it," Andrew said. Mr. Hire just shook his head. Andrew could not believe it. It had taken him so long to convince his stepfather to sign the permission form. This was Andrew's chance to get out of the country. To get away for even just a month. To be happy.

"But Mr. Hire," Andrew started.

"No buts, Andrew. You are not permitted to go to London," Mr. Hire pulled him out of the line.

"Good day," Mr. Hire boarded the plane. Andrew ran towards the ramp, only to be blocked by security guards.

"Passport?" One of them asked.

"Here. Right here. Now may I board the plane? I do not want to miss my flight," Andrew said, hoping the guards would buy his act. One of the guards started to move, but the other shook his head.

"Adult?" The security guard questioned. Andrew's eyes shifted in panic.

"I-I don't need an adult with me!" Andrew stuttered, confused. Andrew recalled the rules for unaccompanied children. "I'm old enough to travel alone. I'm in the unaccompanied children service, you can verify that with me." "You're 11 years old, Andrew. You're not old enough to travel alone. There are no extra fees. You see?" Andrew argued.

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"Uh-huh. And where is the adult to escort you. And their escort papers? Oh, and the papers for the *international flight*?" The guard said suspiciously. Andrew's eyes shifted in panic. He grimaced, running his slender hand through his ash brown curly, messy hair. Andrew tried to think up something quick. *I cannot go back to that- that Tartarus. I just can't.* Andrew thought, clenching his jaw out of habit.

"Please step out of line, Sir," the guard said, pushing Andrew aside to let others board the plane. The two security guards were burly, broad shouldered fellows with big meaty hands that could squeeze an apple to a pulp. The security guard suits stretched dangerously across their chests, the buttons threatening to pop off at any time. Andrew scowled. He turned on his heel and stalked off, enraged. Andrew had no idea what to do, but he did know that he wasn't going back to his stepfather's place. Suddenly, an arm came out of nowhere and dragged Andrew into the shadows, a small cramped hallway that no one noticed.

"Hey!" Andrew yelped, before a soft hand hit him against the cheek before clamping down on his mouth. Andrew's icy blue eyes widened in fear.

"Don't scream," a feminine voice said gently, smooth as glass. Andrew shuddered, clenching his jaw. The woman removed her hand, and Andrew sucked in a breath quickly, confused and frightened.

"Are you Andrew?" The woman asked, her voice sounding young and vulnerable.

"Yeah. Why?" Andrew asked. The woman took Andrew's arm with sharp nails and dragged him out into the open. Andrew finally saw his captor. It was a young girl, auburn hair hanging loosely under a gray beanie. She had on a red plaid flannel and dark jeans, with light brown lumberjack boots, the tops rolled down. On her wrist was a brown braided bracelet, and a small silver ring on her right pinky finger.

"You're a- a girl," Andrew remarked. The girl looked down at herself, and then her hand shot to her heart.

"By golly, you're right!" She said, fear in her eyes. Then it melted away to reveal humor. "What did you expect?" She said, her tone teasing. She grabbed his hand and started down the airport hall.

"Um. Where are we going?" Andrew asked uncertainly.

"You're a shadowling, right?" The girl asked, looking at Andrew as he pulled Andrew's hand from the gate.

"A what?" Andrew said blankly.

"A shadowling. You know

The girl knit her eyebrows,

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Andrew just shook his head.

"But- but you, you were the one. They said you couldn't leave America. They were adamant. It was you, I know it was. You *have* to be a shadowling. You just *have* to be." She stuttered.

"Well, I'm not, so will you just. Let. Go?" Andrew replied, tugging at his arm to no avail. The girl shook her head.

"No way. You're coming to the warehouse. We'll see if you're a shadowling," she retorted, pulling him along faster.

"Hey, whoa, whoa there. Let go, alright? I'm not who you thought I was, and that's that. Now, let. Me. Be!" Andrew said, exasperated. She only shook her head. Andrew struggled, but her hand was like iron. She sighed.

"Do I have to?" she said to herself.

"Have to what?" Andrew repeated hesitantly. The girl drew back her arm, and punched Andrew in the face. He crumpled in her arms, unconscious.

Chapter 2 by SaintSayaka



The situation had not improved by much by the time he had opened his eyes. Bright lights shone in his eyes, and little else. It felt as if his head was been forcibly tilted upwards. He tested his mobility. His arms felt as if they were tied to something, his head was definitely being propped by something, and for some reason, he couldn't feel his legs.

The girl's face suddenly popped into view. Andrew screamed. He hadn't even begun to hear her approach.

"Hey, buddy. Welcome to the world of the living."

"What the hell is going on?" he demanded, shaking his arms against the constraints. They didn't budge.

"Well, I could have done without subduing you if you hadn't refused to come with me otherwise. And thanks for that, by the way - now Taiko is mad at me, and threatening to call in Gramps to give me a talking to. As if my day wasn't bad enough." She suddenly slapped her head. "Oh, right.

You don't know who those people are. But since you won't let me go, I might as well keep running away instead."

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"Language!" she chimed, withdrawing from his face. Light poured back into Andrew's eyes. He groaned. "Now's not the time for dialectics. We have an experiment to preform."

The lights directly above Andrew's head shut off, and in their place, a series of floodlights turned on.

The place she had taken him to was much, much bigger than he had thought. So much so, that there was now a ring of people staring at him illuminated only by the lights - hundreds, maybe. A cold shiver ran down his back.

"Andrew," the girl announced, "welcome to the Warehouse. Let's get on with the show."

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